

NOVEMBER 01 – 14, 2020 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

COOPER'S HAWK

For five years an immature Cooper's Hawk has been able to survive quite well and hone its hunting skills here at EastView. The Cooper's Hawk is one of three species of Accipiter that hunts birds.



1. Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*, immature.
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This immature Cooper's (**Pictures 1&3**) is this year's avian hunter. Will he/she decide to stay this winter? We shall see.

The Cooper's is a bold hawk. A major characteristic of this species is its attitude toward humans. It could care less when you are in its presence as long as you are not too close and don't act as though you are about to do it harm. If you are in the area, it will ignore you and go about its business. If you are too close while it is feeding, it will walk away from you with its prey in its talons or beak. If you keep walking toward it, the hawk will fly with or without its prey. Besides the field characteristics, it's the attitude that tells you what you are looking at.

The other accipiter that looks similar, but smaller than the Cooper's, is the Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* **Picture 2** However, the Sharnie is not arrogant like

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2. Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus* immature

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As females tend to be more aggressive than males when they are immature, I will take the liberty of calling this one she. This gal was flying around our cottage on October 3rd this year. I first noticed her on Holly and Lois's cottage roof. She then flew to our lamp post, then down to something in front of our front door. Decided that was not a good move and flew in back of the Kraus cottage. The next time I saw her she was on top of our bird feeder pole. As can be seen in **picture 1**, she landed on the bar that holds our bird feeders. **Picture 3** she decided to take a look around from the guideposts by one of our newly planted berry trees.

Generally, birds of prey are not this arrogant especially when alone or in the vicinity of humans, and when they are young. When this gal gets older, experience should warn her that humans are not all the same and that she needs to be aware. Let me repeat, the Cooper's arrogance is still an identifying characteristic of this species.

If you look up this bird on the internet and look at the migration map for this species, it gives you the impression that this species migrates out of Vermont. Not so for the past several years, at least from our experience with a single immature Cooper's Hawk. This species will nest in varied woodlands whether coniferous, deciduous or mixed. It prefers to hunt in mature forests or wood edges where it can use the dense cover to stalk its prey and pounce. However, in more open areas it will hunt as stealthily as it can and rapidly catch its prey unawares. This is a characteristic that immature hawks have to learn. Those that learn quickly will survive.

This hawk is a medium sized hawk of the three Accipiter bird hawks. The Sharp-shinned is the smallest and the Northern Goshawk is the largest.

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3. Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*, immature
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The Northern Goshawk, **picture 4**, is found throughout Canada, Alaska, and in the rugged parts of the Rockies and northern United States. The Sharp-shinned is found throughout the whole of North America including Central America. The Cooper's on the other hand, is found primarily in the United States and Central America.



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(5) Adult Cooper's Hawk, © National Audubon.org

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

- **Coywolves, howling**
- **Gray Squirrel**

Weather Tidbits

Month of NOVEMBER 01-14, 2020

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Average November Precipitation for Vermont = 3.15 inches.

Two Weeks Precipitation = 6.6 mm or 0.26 inches, a 2.89 inch deficit.

Overcast Days: We had 5 days of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 4 days produced either a minimum of 0.6 mm to a maximum of 3.0 mm. We are still in a draught.